



Press Release

## **Kingdom of the Ill**

curated by Sara Cluggish and Pavel S. Pyš

Second chapter of the TECHNO HUMANITIES research programme focusing on the debate about health and illness

1 October 2022 - 5 March 2023

PRESS PREVIEW: 29 September, 12 noon

OPENING: 30 September, 7 p.m.

*Kingdom of the Ill*, the second installment of TECHNO HUMANITIES at MUSEION Bolzano, opens a discussion on perceptions and understandings of health and illness.

Bolzano, 29th September 2022 – MUSEION in Bolzano, Italy, presents *Kingdom of the Ill*, an international group exhibition curated by Sara Cluggish and Pavel S. Pyš. Opening on 30 September 2022, the exhibition marks the second installment of TECHNO HUMANITIES, a long-term research project initiated by MUSEION Director Bart van der Heide. The exhibition is supported by a series of public programs and an anthology of newly commissioned critical texts published by Hatje Cantz.

Occupying the entirety of the museum, *Kingdom of the Ill* investigates the contemporary social, corporate and institutional systems that influence our experience of healing and well-being. The exhibition seeks to respond to the current debate on health and illness, contamination and purity, and care and neglect by asking how and by whom a body is defined as healthy or sick.

The exhibition includes works by Enrico Boccioletti, Brothers Sick (Ezra and Noah Benus), Shu Lea Cheang, Heather Dewey-Hagborg & Phillip Andrew Lewis, Julia Frank, Sharona Franklin, Barbara Gamper, Nan Goldin, Johanna Hedva, Ingrid Hora, Adelita Husni-Bey, Ian Law, Carolyn Lazard, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Juliana Cerqueira Leite & Zoë Claire Miller, Mary Maggic, Mattia Marzorati, Prescription Addiction Intervention Now (P.A.I.N.), Erin M. Riley, P. Staff, and Lauryn Youden.

*Kingdom of the Ill* presents over 20 artists whose works draw on their lived experiences. Some of the artists identify as chronically ill or disabled and challenge the distinction between a healthy and an unhealthy body on a daily

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basis. The title of the exhibition references Susan Sontag's work of critical theory *Illness as Metaphor* (1978). The strikethrough in the word "kingdom" in the exhibition's title represents a resistance to Sontag's binary demarcation between the two "kingdoms" of the healthy and the ill. The curators argue that health and illness are not two separate worlds but rather intertwined and co-existing.

The exhibition investigates the ways in which welfare systems and commercial incentives determine healthcare, and how we question common definitions of good health. In this time of pandemic, increasing social anxiety, rising healthcare costs, increased monitoring of medical information and growing precarity among the creative class, can we still say we are truly healthy?

*Kingdom of the Ill* highlights flaws, inequities and shortcomings in the public health system that have come to the surface during the COVID-19 pandemic and observes the ways in which support networks are imagined alongside alternative methods of well-being.

Curators Sara Cluggish and Pavel S. Pyš: *"We began developing Kingdom of the Ill in 2019 and the exhibition has certainly been reshaped by the pandemic... it has brought all matters of health and illness into sharp relief. The COVID-19 outbreak has not only informed ongoing debates on the national, financial, political and ideological dimensions of healthcare provisions, but also shaped our personal experiences of how we receive and provide care, guard personal space through social distancing and decide whether or not to share physical space with others. For many who identify as ill, this mode of navigating the world and our healthcare systems is nothing new and has been, to varying degrees, their experience of life prior to the pandemic."*

The exhibition also engages with health-related topics especially relevant to South Tyrol, including discourses around mental health and the emphasis on holistic or alternative modes of care, as well as far-reaching innovations in preventive healthcare.

The Berlin-based artist Ingrid Hora has created the newly commissioned sculpture *Collective Effort* for the MUSEION Passage. The work features a collection of unique imprints in clay from volunteers and professionals in care work in the region. Curated by assistant curator Frida Carazzato, *Collective Effort* is a monument to the intangible networks of civic engagement and acts of trust that fuel initiatives such as the multi-year research project CHRIS (Cooperative Health Research in South Tyrol). Conceived as a collaboration between the Institute of Biomedicine at Eurac Research (part of the European Academy in Bolzano) and the South Tyrolean Healthcare Authorities, CHRIS features a growing DNA bank that aims to advance the role of preventive medicine within the aging population of the Vinschgau Valley in order to understand the occurrence and development of common diseases.



Accompanying the public program, MUSEION Art Club conceived the performative symposium “Opening the Pill,” which takes place from 17 to 19 November 2022. This event connects the strategies in the exhibition to existing mental health issues in South Tyrol – starting from different well-known pills such as hormone supplements, antidepressants, and party drugs. The event addresses a range of fields in order to investigate the complex relationship between humans and biotechnologies. The performative symposium brings together international and local artists, thinkers and performers, including João Florêncio, Shu Lea Cheng, Zander Porter, Marina Orlova, Barbara Plagg, Simone Frangi, Mary Maggic, Enrico Floriddia, Silvia Casini, Martina Drechsel, and Casa Basaglia/Merano, to unpack the topic of *addiction* through talks, workshops, performances and installations.

An anthology of critical texts, the second in the Techno Humanities publication series, will be published by Hatje Cantz to amplify the discourses surrounding the exhibition’s topics. The reader features texts written by Bart van der Heide, Sara Cluggish, Pavel S. Pyš, Lioba Hirsch, Amy Berkowitz, Artur Olesch, Mary Maggic, P. Staff, and Lynn Hershman Leeson. Topics in the publication include negotiating illness in relation to systemic public and corporate forces; enduring inequities; allyship and forms of care; global economy and healthcare access; negotiating social distancing; proximity, mental health, invisibility and what the body absorbs in a pandemic; technology and virtual spaces in a pandemic; negotiating systems of care as protest; and DIY, hacking and alternative healing. The reader will be published in English, German and Italian.



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